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December 29, 1955

## REPORT ON TELEVISION IN EUROPE

### INTRODUCTION:

The OCB requested that recommendations be developed for its consideration to strengthen broadcasting facilities and to encourage the use of television in Western Europe. In connection with the development of these recommendations, it was thought that consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a television network in Europe identified with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was also indicated that possible use of the Eurovision network should be considered in the development of the organization.

### I. THE PROBLEM

The problem is to counter Soviet influence in the television medium in Western Europe and to strengthen indigenous television broadcasting activities in the area.

### II. DISCUSSION

#### 1. European-wide Facilities

There has never been any European-wide sound broadcasting on a regular basis, although the technical facilities have long existed. Groups of two or more countries do from time to time make arrangements to pick up some event of special news value or some spectacular such as a sporting event.

Neither has there ever been any European-wide television system on a regular sustained basis. Most of the west European countries working through the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) have established a television network system known as EUROVISION. (For details see Attachment I) This is an arrangement whereby the microwave and coaxial cable facilities of the various countries are tied together into a network with specially designed converters at various points in the network. These converters change the signal from one television system to another since there are three different television systems in operation in Europe. They are the French system, the British system and the CCIR (Consultative Committee International Radio) system, which is most generally used. The European-wide transmission of TV programs by means of Eurovision is an irregular and sporadic thing. The Eurovision system is set up for events of only the highest and most general interest, such as the Salzburg Music Festival, special events at the Vatican, etc.

SECRET

There are two fundamental reasons why European-wide broadcasting and television have not become a reality. The first reason is the language barrier, although this is not the most important reason, since this can be dealt with and has been dealt with satisfactorily through the use of translators. The language barrier obviously is not a barrier in case of musical programs. The second and most important barrier to the establishment of Europe-wide TV and sound broadcasting operation is that there is no Europe-wide system of landlines under a single ownership, management, and rate structure. The landline trunks in each country are owned by the Government (with one or two minor exceptions) and are operated by a Ministry of the Government. These facilities are generally considered as revenue producing for the Government. There is variation in rates. There is, however, a high degree of technical and operational standardization, at least to a degree that this is not an obstacle to networking. There is nothing in Europe comparable to the long lines department of AT&T in the United States. This is the main obstacle to networking either TV or sound broadcasting. The manner of arranging for the collection of revenues from the various national broadcasting or TV networks and the dispersing of these revenues to the various countries that provide TV or sound broadcasting trunk facilities as part of a European-wide system involves a tremendous amount of negotiation and arrangements. There is nothing in Europe comparable to the toll division formulas and arrangements which AT&T in this country has worked out with the local telephone companies that operate within the various states of the Union. There are, of course, problems involving copyrights and arrangements with musicians unions in the various countries, but these are believed to be minor and subject to fairly easy solution.

The construction of trunk line communication facilities within the various countries of Europe that has flowed from NATO activities has provided the physical basis for Eurovision. While it may be argued that the respective countries would eventually have built such broad band transmission facilities (microwave and coaxial system), they certainly would not have built them as soon as they have. These trunk line facilities are part of the NATO infrastructure.

It is understood that the NATO communications infrastructure was financed to the extent of about 40% by U. S. dollar funds through a combination of economic and military aid. This dollar expenditure, which involves all of the NATO countries and extends across Greece and Turkey, will approximate one billion dollars. Although the detailed arrangements vary somewhat from country to country, it is understood that the general principle is that the facility becomes the property of the national government, usually the communications ministry and the NATO organization leases back from the country such facilities as it currently needs. In return for the lease fee the National Communications Ministry maintains the facility and keeps it in operation. The capacity of these facilities is obviously far greater than that normally

SECRET

used for NATO purposes. The physical facilities of the NATO communications infrastructure provide the backbone of the Eurovision network system.

In December of 1952, an attempt was made to secure the cooperation of top NATO officials in establishing the Europe-wide sound broadcasting network, with TV in the future. At that time, representatives of the United States Information Agency (then a part of the State Department) discussed this matter with Ambassador Merchant, General Ridgeway and Lord Ismay. At the suggestion of Lord Ismay, the matter was also discussed with General Jacobs, Director of the British Broadcasting Corporation. General Richards, Head of the Military Assistance Group (MAAG) was also briefed on the proposal. Subsequently, the British torpedoed the idea and nothing more came of it.

In the matter of NATO information activities, the British have historically been very jealous of their special and close relationships with the United States and obviously with Canada. Neither has this country made any determined effort to persuade NATO to embark upon any Europe-wide programs of an ambitious nature such as broadcasting, networking or Europe-wide TV.

Before it would be possible to make any intelligent estimate of the possibilities or to make concrete recommendations for any Europe-wide sound broadcasting or TV activity in terms of NATO, it would be necessary to explore the current attitudes and thinking that exists in NATO in the general field of information activity.

In the light of all the background and current facts, it seems that the only practical approach to bringing about Europe-wide sound broadcasting or television is to first create the facility for accomplishing it. Not the physical facility which already largely exists, but the organic facility in the form of some supranational authority or organization which can perform for Europe the same functions that the long lines division of AT&T performs in the United States. Since NATO has surrendered its control over these facilities, except for specified use of the facility for military defense, NATO does not seem like an appropriate agency for such an activity, although it should not be ruled out.

The European Broadcasting Union has attempted to fill this function as pointed out above, but it has the shortcoming that it is in reality a "Trade Association of Broadcasting Administrations", and has none of the organic authority necessary to collect tolls from the broadcasters, equalize rates and pay national ministries for the use of their facilities.

SECRET

SECRET

What is plainly needed is a supranational authority so constituted that the broadcasters, sound or TV, will deal only with it on all matters involving the transmission of programs across national boundaries and the authority in turn will deal with the national ministries owning and operating the physical facilities.

Obviously, such an authority once established and in being would provide in itself a mechanism useful for defense of Western Europe.

Several questions present themselves in connection with U. S. consideration of such a project. Does U. S. foreign policy and do United States objectives in Europe warrant serious consideration by this country of open or covert sponsorship of such a supranational authority? To what extent would this country be willing to financially underwrite such an authority for say an initial period of five years? Would the United States point of view be more effectively presented to the peoples of Europe through such a Europe-wide system than through the present method of working with each country individually?

SECRET

SECRET

## 2. TV Behind the Curtain

Our information on the status of television behind the iron curtain is limited at this time. There are many things about Soviet Orbit television we do not know. We do know, however, that the development of television in the Soviet Orbit is being pursued, and if the figures we have at hand are indicative, it would seem that the rate of development both in the establishing of television stations and increasing the number of television receivers in the hands of the public is progressing at about the same rate incident to West European countries and other parts of the Free World. For example:

### 1955

There are 31 Soviet Orbit television stations telecasting direct to the public.

### 1956

A year from now, in 1956, it is estimated that there will be 46 such Soviet Orbit television stations.

### 1957

It is further estimated that by 1957 the Soviet Orbit will have 54 television stations operating.

The figures on receivers are apparently available at this time only for the present and five months ago. In July 1955, best estimates indicated 708,000 Soviet Orbit television receivers. Today, in December 1955, the figure is 1,060,700. This represents an increase in the number of television receivers of 49.8%, or an approximate growth of 10% per month over the past five months. This is a figure that matches very well the growth in West European countries and the Free World (outside of the United States), as a whole, during the same period of time.

We have reasonably good information about the location of existing and proposed television transmitters in the Soviet Orbit. Of the 31 Soviet Orbit stations now telecasting to the public, 18 are in the USSR and 8 in East Germany. No other European satellite has more than one station in operation and some of these are only experimental. Of some 18 orbit stations under construction, 12 are in the USSR. Of the 1,060,700 estimated receivers in the European Soviet Orbit countries, about 1 million are in the USSR.

These facts might indicate an apparent lack of progress in the satellites (other than East Germany). It should be noted, however, that if the pattern of development in free world countries is reflected in the satellites, one can expect a considerably accelerated expansion of television once it is initiated.

Details on locations of stations now operating, under construction, and proposed appear in Attachment II.

SECRET

3. Soviet Orbit Stations Along the Curtain

It is of interest to note that among the Soviet Orbit television stations now established or planned for early construction are stations strategically located along the "curtain line". Such stations include:

Leningrad	(Existing)
Tallin	"
Riga	"
Kalinin	"
Berlin	"
Brocken-Harz Mts.	"
Dresden	"
Leipzig	"
Chemnitz	"
Marlow	"
Prague	"
Bratislava	(Under Construction)
Budapest	(Existing)
Bucharest	"
Sofia	"

The number of these stations either in operation or assumed to be in operation will include in their coverage areas sizeable amounts of territory and population west of the "curtain line". Notable among the stations are ones in:

Leningrad, Russia	
Tallin, Estonia	
Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden in East Germany	
Bratslavia, Czechoslovakia	(Planned)
Sofia, Bulgaria	

Such stations placed on or near the "curtain line" would have the effect, if consistently tuned in by West European nationals, of extending the "curtain line" to the West by whatever the coverage area of the stations might be.

It is possible partially to evaluate the situations in connection with these various stations.

(a) Estonia

The situation in Finland on television has been pointed up in a number of ways by the establishing of the Soviet television station in Tallin, Estonia, approximately thirty-five miles across the Gulf from Helsinki.

The Soviet, partially through Communist-slanted Finnish newspapers, has been promoting the idea that the Tallin station was largely established to provide television service to a large share of the Finnish population in Southern Finland. The Soviet Government has made overtures to the Finnish government to permit exportation of Russian television sets into Finland and various

trade arrangements to accomplish this have been suggested--among them an offer to trade Russian television sets for Finnish timber. (See also 4 (a) below).

(b) Russia

It is not generally realized, but the Russian television station at Leningrad can be received in South Eastern Finland. However, since no television sets exist in this area, such reception has been restricted to broadcast technicians who have been conducting field tests in the area.

(c) Poland

We do not as yet have information about television stations that may be established on the Baltic Sea in Poland, but it is possible that if such stations were established, for example, in Kolobrzeg, transmissions might well be seen in Copenhagen and Southern Sweden.

(d) East Germany

There are a number of television stations being established in East Germany, notably in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz. The station in Berlin, of course, is a logical location for coverage of large population areas in West Germany.

(e) Czechoslovakia

A television station being built in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, has been publicized by the Czechs as designed to also serve our "friends across the border in Austria".

(f) Bulgaria

There have been rumors about a similar station outside of Pilsen, Bulgaria. While it does not at this time seem to be of great importance, it would be possible for the Bulgarian television station in Sofia to be effective in Yugoslavia.

4. Western Europe

(a) Finland

The situation in Finland in connection with the Tallin and Leningrad stations has improved. It would seem to follow that much of this improvement in the last thirty days is the result of activity on the part of the American Embassy in Finland, USIS-Helsinki and effort by the U. S. Information Agency and other agencies. At this writing, it would appear that there is a strong possibility that the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation (which holds the government broadcast monopoly) will establish a television station in Helsinki some

time during the coming year. Information would tend to indicate that this station will operate on West European standards. It would seem that Finnish manufacturers will build the bulk of television receivers for local consumption. It would also seem that Finland is open to assistance in establishment of the television station at Helsinki and others planned in the future.

(b) West Germany

The development of television in West Germany is unfolding at a satisfactory pace. There are now 24 stations operating, 10 under construction, and 17 more proposed. By and large the problem of Soviet influence would seem to be centered in Berlin. It would seem that one way to combat the influence of a first class television station in the Eastern Zone of Berlin would be to establish a similar station under Western auspices in the Allied sector of Berlin.

(c) Austria

If, as the Czechs propose, their television station in Bratislava will be programmed for Vienna as well, ways should be found to bolster Austrian television and help it move forward at a faster pace. There are now four stations in operations and two additional ones are proposed.

(d) Other countries

In the United Kingdom, Italy, and France TV stations in operation total fifteen, twelve and ten respectively. Additional ones are under construction and proposed. All other countries in Western Europe, except Portugal, Norway and Yugoslavia have from one to four stations in operation. Portugal has proposed two stations and each Norway and Yugoslavia have an experimental station in operation. There does not appear to be active threats of penetration by Soviet Orbit TV in these Western European countries. The potential threat always remains, however.



## 5. Programming Support

### (a) Soviet-Western Europe, U.S.

In discussing penetration of Western countries by Soviet Orbit TV, there is another more subtle field of entry, which does not depend upon the adoption of similar technical standards. This consists of the exchange of TV films between the East and the West, which has been going on for a short time in a very limited way.

The International News Service (INS) correspondent in Moscow, representing the American Television Newsreel Agency of New York (Telenews) has concluded negotiations with "Sovexportfilm" (acting on behalf of the Central Television Studio of Moscow) for the exchange of newsfilm on a straight foot-for-foot basis, to be released by each side "without any distortions, both as regard editing of the film and the commentary." INS has similar exchange agreements with one or two of the Satellites.

The Literary Gazette of October 1 says that "the first friendly contact between the television centers of the USSR and England was established a year ago: on September 27, Moscovites and Britons saw two films on their home screens; 'Through the Eyes of England' and 'Children of the Soviet Union.'" It is also stated that other film productions will be sent in the very near future to English television firms, which have also announced their desire to begin an exchange of programs with the USSR.

Under the USSR-British arrangement each agrees to use a specified amount of the total program material exchanged. It is reported that the British are not happy with this arrangement since the Soviet programs are very high quality productions and are extremely propagandistic compared to the type of programs which the British furnish to the USSR.

As further examples of East-West TV exchanges, we note that "at a recent press conference at the East Berlin TV Center, leading members of its staff reported that the Center not only planned live relays from 'friendly' countries, but had already established contacts with capitalist TV countries, for instance in Belgium and Italy." The Czechoslovak News Agency, also reported on October 6 that "talks are under way to establish cooperation between the Czechoslovak and the West German, Italian and British television organizations." These pronouncements have very little, if any, foundation in fact so far as can be determined. The U.S. is discouraging such negotiations and arrangements when they become known.

### (b) U.S. - Western Europe

TV program materials are furnished to the several countries in Western Europe, both by the U.S. Information Agency and private U.S. organizations. Among the materials provided by USIA are five series of

SECRET

programs acquired from private sources in the United States. Each series varies in number of issues and their use by the stations in the European countries. Any given series may be used in as many as six or seven different countries involving ten to fifteen different key stations and networks. A weekly newsreel and special events materials are provided to all twelve European countries involving some fifteen key stations and networks.

The present weekly newsreel will gradually be changed from "spot news" to a "current events" reel along documentary lines based on the news. Kinescopes, special films, stock footage, technical information on program subjects and the like, are continuously supplied to meet local country TV demands.

Two original productions applying to Europe are well underway. A series of six subjects on "Report from America" is being produced. Language versions will follow. "Pictures from the New World" is produced in original German and telecast over the seven stations of the NWDR in West Germany.

In moving from the experimental phase to the full operating phase, increased emphasis will be given by USIA to unattributed programming and the providing of assistance on a local level toward the production of indigenous programming.

Some U.S. network telecasters have working arrangements with TV network stations throughout Western Europe, notably the U.K. for the exchange of program materials. In addition, private commercial TV production organizations provide a wide variety of programming which is available for purchase by foreign TV stations. To date, such programming is largely in the English language but there are near future plans for other languages - mostly German, Italian and French.

### III. Courses of Action for Further Study

It is doubtful that the information that exists, as represented in this memorandum, is conclusive enough to foster extensive recommendations. It would seem that the best course might be to refer the general problem to the OCB Committee on Broadcasting and Television that has been established recently.

It would seem that it is not possible to arrive at conclusions or make recommendations until further information is available on the following subjects:

1. A determination of the technical feasibility of jamming Russian TV stations located around the periphery of the Iron

SECRET

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Curtain in such a manner that station coverage extends over into western countries.

2. A determination of the effects and implications of such a jamming operation of Soviet stations to the operation of TV stations on the western side of the Iron Curtain.

3. A determination of the technical possibilities of building TV stations adjacent to but on the western side of the Iron Curtain so that their coverage extends across the curtain to adjacent Soviet areas. This should include rough estimates of the cost of such installation.

4. A policy determination with respect to the jamming of the East Zone TV station in Berlin.

As a preliminary step the four questions posed above might be referred to the Technical Panel on International Broadcasting (TPIB) of OCB for study and recommendation at an early date.

Other suggestions which might be given further study include:

1. The possibility of cooperation with U.S. manufacturers in obtaining shipment of old models of U.S. receiver chassis to Finland or elsewhere--or to stimulate the construction of chassis in West Berlin.

2. The possibility of pursuing further any opportunities offered by Eurovision and NATO.

3. The possible use of the Nordic Council in the Finnish situation and other Scandinavian problem situations as they evolve.

4. Means of providing assistance from official and private sources to strengthen the development of TV in countries friendly to the U.S.

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